

## School of Arts and Sciences

## PRE-LAW

[www.law.pitt.edu](http://www.law.pitt.edu)

Students who are interested in attending law school after receiving their undergraduate degree are "designated" pre-law at the University of Pittsburgh. It is not a major, but rather a way to identify your interest in future study. Designating yourself pre-law does not mean you have to go to law school directly after you complete your undergraduate program, or at all. Making your interest in law known as early as your freshman year only helps your advisor suggest courses, extracurricular activities, and special programs that you can pursue to develop the skills you'll need in law school and improve your chances of being admitted.

Perhaps the first question you should consider is: why law school? Maybe you have an interest in the intricacies of the legal system or the delivery of justice, consider a law degree a stepping stone to a career in politics or business, or desire the measure of status and success that can come with a career in law. Being a pre-law student helps you get an accurate idea of what law school and life as a practicing attorney are like. Keep in mind that working in the legal profession can take on many forms, but few, if any, are similar to the dramatic or comic portrayals of attorneys we see on television and film. In truth, law school is three years of demanding graduate study, and the legal profession is a highly competitive field that enforces conformity and comes with no guarantee of a high-profile, lucrative position.

**Your Undergraduate Degree**

Law schools, unlike other professional schools, do not require that applicants follow a specific major or complete a sequence of courses to be admitted. Students enter the field of law from a wide variety of undergraduate fields; in fact, law schools encourage undergraduates to pursue a diverse course of study because the legal profession is involved in so many different aspects of society. A strong liberal arts education helps develop skills that are appropriate for law school, such as writing, analytical thinking, research, and speaking. You also receive a background in history and philosophy that helps you understand the social and historical issues that gave rise to current legal doctrines and trends. At the University's School of Arts and Sciences, you can select from over 50 Arts and Sciences majors, including:

Arts and Sciences/Business Dual Major	Film Studies	Music
Africana Studies	French	Neuroscience
Anthropology	Geology	Philosophy
Architectural Studies	German	Physics
Biological Sciences	History	Polish
Chemistry	History of Art & Architecture	Political Science
Chinese	History & Philosophy of Science	Psychology
Communication	Interdisciplinary Studies	Religious Studies
Computer Science	Italian	Russian
Ecology and Evolution	Japanese	Sociology
Economics	Linguistics	Spanish
English Literature	Mathematics	Studio Arts
English Writing	Microbiology	Theatre Arts
Environmental Studies	Molecular Biology	Urban Studies

A liberal arts degree is not your only option as an undergraduate interested in law. Students who have received undergraduate degrees from other Pitt schools, such as the College of Business Administration, School of Engineering, or School of Nursing, have also gone on to law school. Specialized training of this nature can lead to creative avenues of employment in a field as competitive as law. Regardless of your major, law schools are most concerned that you have taken a challenging curriculum, maintained a competitive grade point average, and developed skills useful in the study and practice of law.



You could strive to develop these skills through the following types of courses and activities:

### **Skills**

*Writing clearly and comprehensively*

*Speaking clearly and persuasively*

*Critical reading*

*Logical thinking and analysis*

### **Courses and Activities**

*English composition and writing classes; classes that require research papers; The Pitt News, Impulse (student newspapers)*

*Communication classes in public speaking and argument; debate team*

*History, philosophy, and political science courses*

*Logic classes in the Department of Philosophy*

Undergraduate life at the University of Pittsburgh itself also serves as unique preparation for law school. Being part of a diverse student population on campus helps you encounter and understand many different viewpoints, another trait essential to the practice of law. You can also meet with students and faculty from the School of Law to tour the school, or even sit in on a class for a first-hand look at what it's like to attend law school and to practice law.

### **Pre-Law and the University Honors College**

Through the University Honors College (UHC), students undertake intellectually challenging course work and receive special advising geared toward a wide range of academic options such as interdisciplinary majors, dual-degree, and joint-degree programs to name a few. Honors students may also pursue a Bachelor of Philosophy degree—a unique, competency-based undergraduate degree, involving extra degree requirements, a thesis, and defense of the thesis before a selected board of faculty members. Because admission to law school is competitive, the challenge, discipline, and training provided through UHC classes is worth investigating.

### **3/3 Law School Program**

University of Pittsburgh students enrolled in the School of Arts and Sciences may be eligible for the Accelerated Law Admissions Program (ALAP) or 3/3 Program. This allows you to receive both a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and a law degree (JD) in six rather than seven years. In the 3/3 Program, students attend undergraduate courses for three years, and then begin classes at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Admitted students will complete the requirements for the bachelor's degree after completing their first year of law school. Students must complete their major by the end of their junior year; they must declare their majors by the end of their first year. Potential applicants are encouraged to take summer classes during their sophomore year to reduce third year credits. Students must take the LSAT by December of their junior year in order to meet application deadlines for the School of Law. Acceptance is competitive, and only students with above-average grades are encouraged to apply. LSAT scores must also be competitive with the rest of the applicant pool. Prospective students are strongly encouraged to meet with an Arts and Sciences advisor as early as possible to map out a course of study.

### **Graduate Joint and Cooperative Degrees**

A working knowledge of areas such as economics, public policy, health policy, and international affairs is frequently useful in the field of law. Attorneys who have trained in another field are often better prepared to meet the intricate legal needs of clients in today's world. The University of Pittsburgh offers a variety of joint and cooperative programs for students who wish to combine a JD with a master's degree from the following schools:

School of Arts and Sciences, Department of History and Philosophy of Science—MA in medical ethics

Graduate School of Public Health

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business

Carnegie Mellon Graduate School of Industrial Administration

Carnegie Mellon H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management

### **Freshman Admission Guarantee Program**

If you are very certain of your academic path, you may apply for the Freshman Admission Guarantee Program for the University's School of Law as an incoming freshman. This program guarantees your admission to law school after you complete your undergraduate degree if you meet the required criteria (*Note: criteria subject to annual review and change for new freshmen*). To be considered, you must rank in the top 10 percent of your high school graduating class, score 1300 or higher on the SAT (29 on the ACT), and indicate "pre-law" on your admissions application to the School of Arts and Sciences. While you are in Arts and Sciences, you must maintain a 3.5 grade point average as a full-time student, satisfy a standard character review, and score 163 or higher on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). You do not need to complete a separate application for this program.

### **Law School Admission Test (LSAT)**

Before applying to all American Bar Association-accredited law schools, applicants are required to take the LSAT. This is usually taken in June or October of the application year. The LSAT provides a useful measure of an individual's ability to handle new situations, using well-developed reading and logical thought skills as principal tools. The LSAT is made up of four types of questions. The first measures strength in critical reading. The second measures the ability to understand a structure of relationships and to draw conclusions about the structure. The third type evaluates reasoning skills, while the fourth measures aptitude for analyzing and using a variety of arguments. The exam also includes a 30-minute writing sample. The sample is not scored, but a copy is sent to each law school to which the LSAT scores are reported. A pre-law advisor at the University can help you prepare for the LSAT and apply to the law schools of your choice.

#### **For pre-law advising, please contact:**

University of Pittsburgh  
Career Development Office  
Angela Illig, Pre-Law Advisor  
224 William Pitt Union  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
412-648-7130

#### **For information on Arts and Sciences majors, please contact:**

University of Pittsburgh  
Office of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
412-624-PITT  
E-mail: [oafa@pitt.edu](mailto:oafa@pitt.edu)  
[www.oafa.pitt.edu](http://www.oafa.pitt.edu)

## **Special Programs and Opportunities**

**Pre-Law Society** sponsors guest speakers in topics relating to the field of law and offers trial LSAT tests for Pitt students interested in attending law school.

### **William Pitt Debating Union**

Arguing effectively is a critical skill for all attorneys; debating on a competitive basis gives you experience researching and arguing an issue thoroughly, efficiently, and with conviction. Pitt has a proud tradition of intercollegiate debate dating back over 100 years. Today, the William Pitt Debating Union participates in two-person policy debate at the local, regional, and national levels. Anyone interested in debate is encouraged to join; no former debate experience is required. For more information, please contact University of Pittsburgh, Gordon Mitchell, Director, William Pitt Debating Union, 1117 Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-624-8531; [gordonm@pitt.edu](mailto:gordonm@pitt.edu).

**Internships** allow students to gain practical work experience in the professional world and explore a particular interest or career path while earning credits toward their degree. Students interested in attending law school have conducted internships at a variety of places, including the American Civil Liberties Union, Pittsburgh City Council, Allegheny County Bar Association, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and local law offices, courts, nonprofit organizations, Congressional offices, and corporations.

### **Volunteer Service**

Volunteering gives you valuable experience in understanding diverse groups of people and addressing their needs. At the same time, it makes you a more active member of the community and can help you determine what kind of work interests you. Pitt's Student Volunteer Outreach Center matches students' skills and interests with the needs of over 100 local community agencies and annual programs, such as the Mentoring and Tutoring Programs, Junior Achievement, Alternative Spring Break, and Scouting for Food.

### **Law School Fair**

This event brings representatives from law schools to Pitt to speak with prospective students about their programs.

**Phi Beta Kappa** is the most highly respected academic honorary society for undergraduates in the country. Membership may make you a more competitive candidate for law school. To qualify to be elected, you must meet specific academic requirements in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, math, and a foreign language, and maintain a quality point average (QPA) between 3.5 and 4.0.

### **Study Abroad**

Studying abroad is an exciting way to add an international perspective to your undergraduate education and strengthen your credentials as a graduate. The University of Pittsburgh encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity (almost 5 percent of Pitt students study abroad compared with 1.3 percent, nationally). Study abroad will not only distinguish you when you enter the job market or pursue graduate study, but also help broaden your experience of the world beyond your own country's borders, giving you an appreciation of other cultures and peoples while allowing you to earn credits toward your degree. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable.

Study abroad programs that may appeal to pre-law students include:

**Pitt in China**—This three-week summer program at Beijing University offers you an unparalleled opportunity to experience and learn first-hand the history, culture, and contemporary political, economic, and social environments of this fascinating country during this exciting period in its history. Courses are taught in English, and students take daily Chinese language classes. Course topics include Chinese foreign policy, politics, human rights, and the criminal justice system. Visits to sites such as Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, and a local court are included.

**Pitt in London**—This one-semester program lets students take courses in British history, literature, art, government, and theater production taught by a professor from Pitt and British faculty members. Juniors and seniors can also gain work experience in London through internships in the fields of business, politics, communications, theater, and museum management. Students live in a dorm or with a British family, and field trips to places of historical and cultural significance such as Stonehenge, Oxford, Bath, and Stratford-upon-Avon are included.